

NOVEMBER 2024

# THRIVING THROUGH CULTURE EVALUATION

REFLECTING ON THREE-YEARS OF ARTS AND CULTURAL  
PROGRAMMES TO SUPPORT YOUNG LONDONERS



SUPPORTED BY

**MAYOR OF LONDON**

# THRIVING THROUGH CULTURE EVALUATION

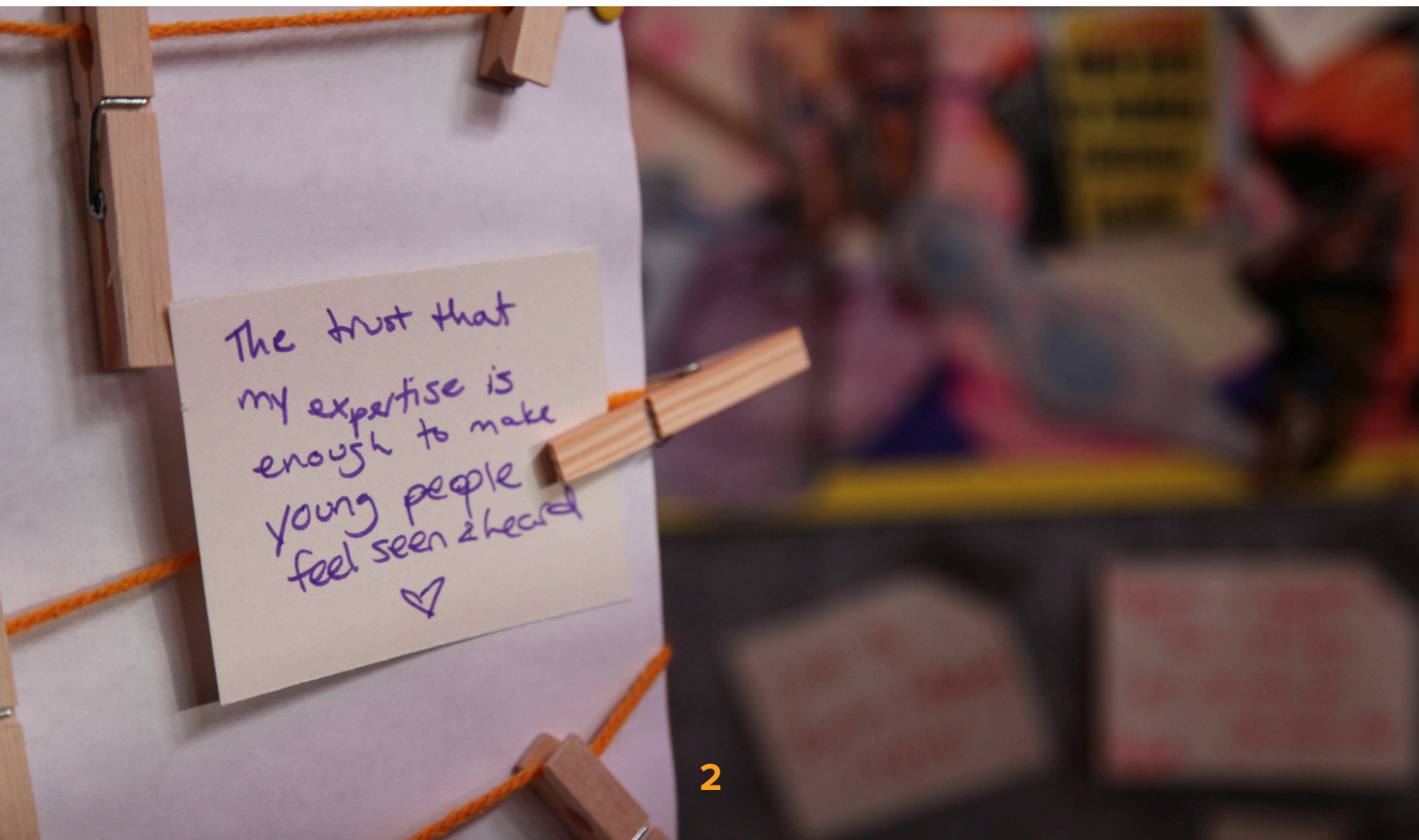
NOVEMBER 2024

## Acknowledgements

Thrive LDN and the Greater London Authority (Culture & Creative Industries and 24 hour London) would like to thank everyone involved in the Thriving through Culture programme (2021-2024):

- All the young people who have shared their stories.
- All our partners and artists: Amanda Parker, the Baring Foundation, Bernie Grant Arts Centre, Boundless Theatre, Chisenhale Gallery, Felix Mortimer, James Leadbitter (the vacuum cleaner), Living Proof, Madlove, Rich Mix, The Southbank Centre, Stanley Arts, Whitechapel Gallery, National Youth Theatre, Tyreis Holder, Amina Jama, Yomi Sode, Simon Tomlinson, Becky Warnock, Cecilia Wee, Seth Pimlott, Tara Brown, Nicola Sim, and many more.
- The Thriving through Culture Advisory Group who supported the delivery of the programme by steering the work and providing constructive feedback.

Collectively this programme has enabled us to reimagine spaces in London where arts and creativity play a central role in supporting children and young people's mental health.





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# FOREWORD

DAN BARRETT, THRIVE LDN DIRECTOR



**From the pandemic to the cost-of-living crisis, extra stressors have exacerbated the mental health of young people.**

Increased pressures on individuals and families, coupled with the strain on health and social care systems, have highlighted the urgent need for innovative and collaborative approaches.

By uniting a network of artists, health professionals, and community organisations the Thriving through Culture programme stands as a powerful testament to how much we can achieve when we work together, across specialisms and sectors.

Over the past three years, Thriving through Culture has held and encouraged conversations on what we collectively need to do to support young people's mental health and the key role in which art and culture should play in our collective response; highlighting the transformative impact of collaboration.

Perhaps most importantly, this reflective report showcases the importance of building trust and offering safe spaces for young people to lead this work. By providing platforms for expression and sharing experiences, this programme has empowered young people to become active participants in their own wellbeing. Our belief in the power of young people's voices lies at the heart of this initiative.

By fostering collaboration between the arts, health, and social care sectors, we can create more inclusive and supportive communities for our young people which look beyond the traditional offers. Such as spaces where art and creativity flourish, that offer a lifeline for those seeking connection and belonging – which are fundamental to mental health.

By investing in arts and culture, we are investing in the mental health and wellbeing of our future generations. This report is a call to action, whether at local, sub-regional, or citywide level. It is a call upon organisations across London to join us in building a city where every young person has access to the support and opportunities they deserve, and which meet their needs.

Together we can create a London where creativity is celebrated, where young people's voices are heard, and mental health is prioritised. This report shows us how.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



**Thriving through Culture** is a three-year programme (2021-2024) match funded by the Baring Foundation. As part of this programme, Thrive LDN and the GLA brought together culture and health and care partners to deliver a series of arts and cultural programmes to support young Londoners with lived experience of mental health and meet the ambitions of the Mayor of London's Recovery Missions.

Thrive LDN was commissioned by the GLA to deliver this evaluation. In this report we present a high-level overview of the impact of Thriving through Culture through a timeline of activities, setting the context and case for providing opportunities for young people to have their voices heard, by presenting spotlights on their experiences and making recommendations for the health and social care sector.

Thrive LDN's vision for all young Londoners to have fair and equal exposure to the social, culture, economic and physical factors which shape good health and wellbeing is ambitious, but essential.

We need everyone across the culture, health and care sector involved to build a systemic approach to embedding young-Londoner led voices into policy, action and improvements in London. We are calling for:

1. Funders and policymakers to prioritise investments in preventative mental health initiatives for young people that focus on addressing the underlying social determinants of health, such as poverty, housing instability, discrimination, and access to education.
2. Collective responsibility to create a system where everyone's voice is heard and valued. This includes sustainable funding and support for artists with lived experience of mental health to create safe, accessible spaces for children and young people to express themselves through art and creativity.
3. An increase in Youth Participation in Decision-Making: Opportunities for young Londoners to speak directly to policy makers about the importance of creative approaches to support their mental health and wellbeing.





“Young people are really angry. They feel let down... [this project] is about creating spaces where they can be angry. They can make art about that. Their rage is valid. They are allowed to feel that, and we have to hold that for them... They also want to be in spaces that validate their experience so that they can be with other young people and talk about what they have been through, they can write about it, they can do illustrations...”

“I see you; I hear you; I have also been through that.”

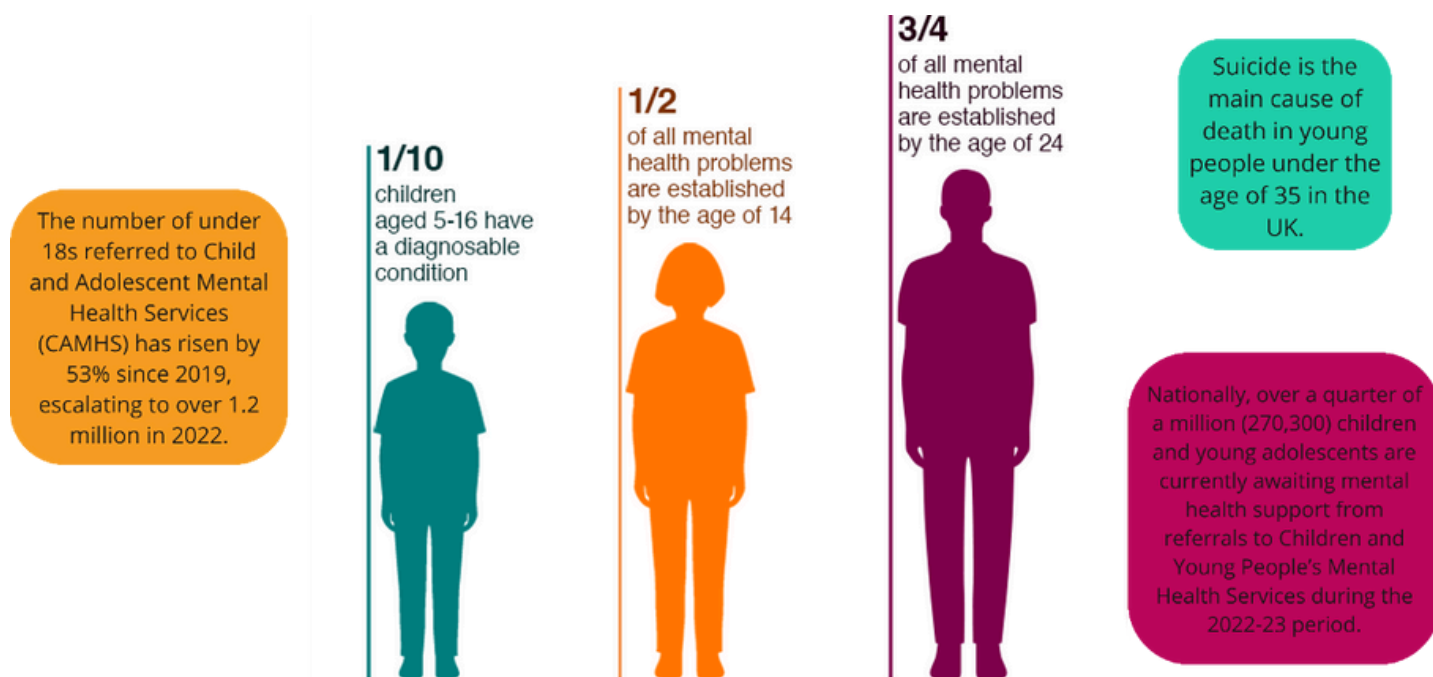
***Podcast ep. 56 Disability and... Mental Health with James Leadbitter. The Disability And... Podcast 29, February 2024***



# BACKGROUND



In 2021, The GLA Culture Team and Thrive LDN joined forces to deliver a three year mental health programme for children and young people. Thriving through Culture, match funded by the Baring Foundation, was designed to support children and young people experiencing mental health ill through art activities. The infographic and context below provide some context and insight on the need for this partnership.



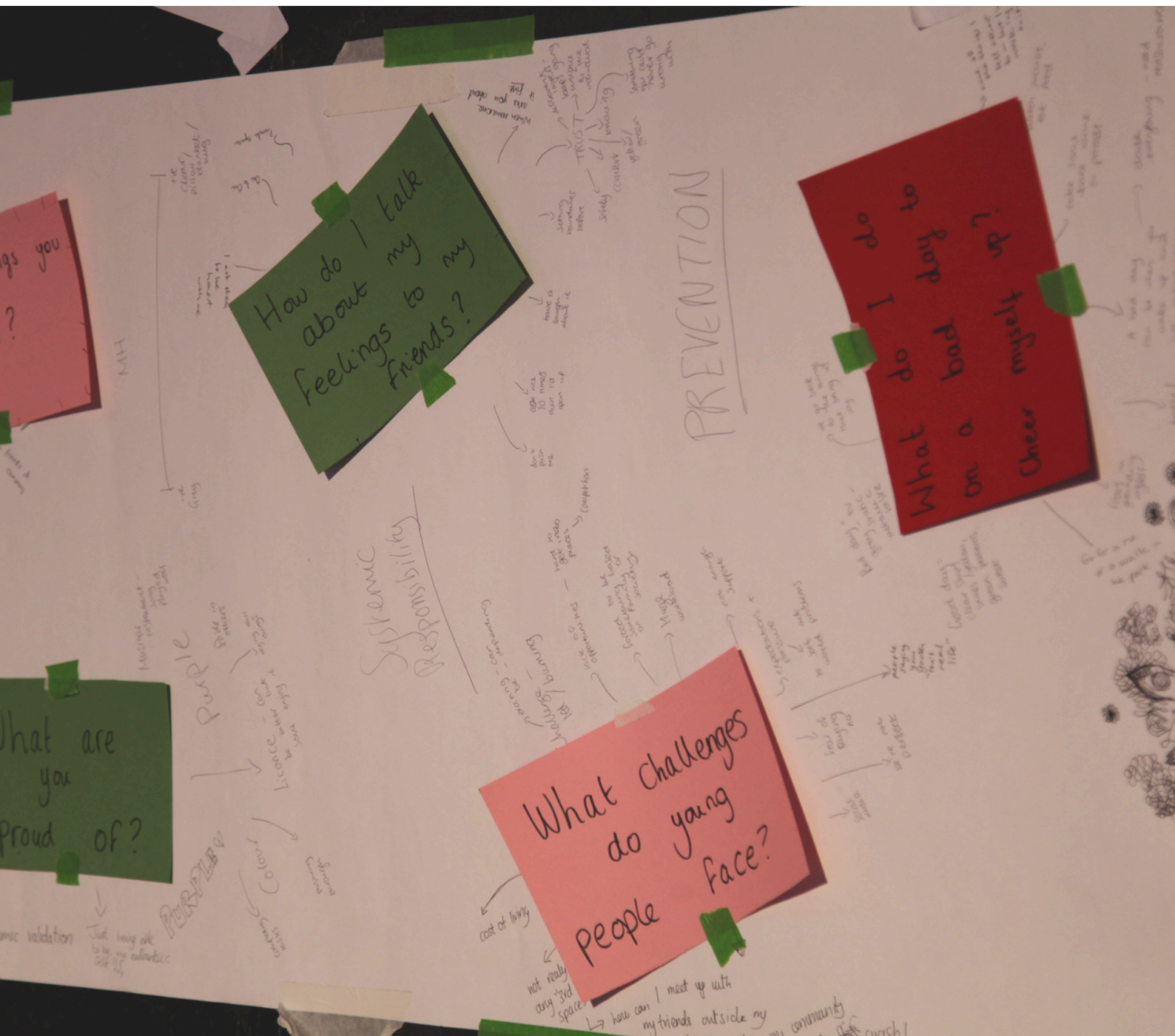
From Kessler et al, Arch Gen Psych 2005; Infographic from BBC News "Mental health: 10 charts on the scale of the problem"

*"We aren't sitting around, waiting for the system to change, anymore; we are rising up and fighting for the mental health care we deserve. This is why this project and others like it are so important. This is how we make change."*

**Young Londoner at the Whitechapel Gallery event 2023**

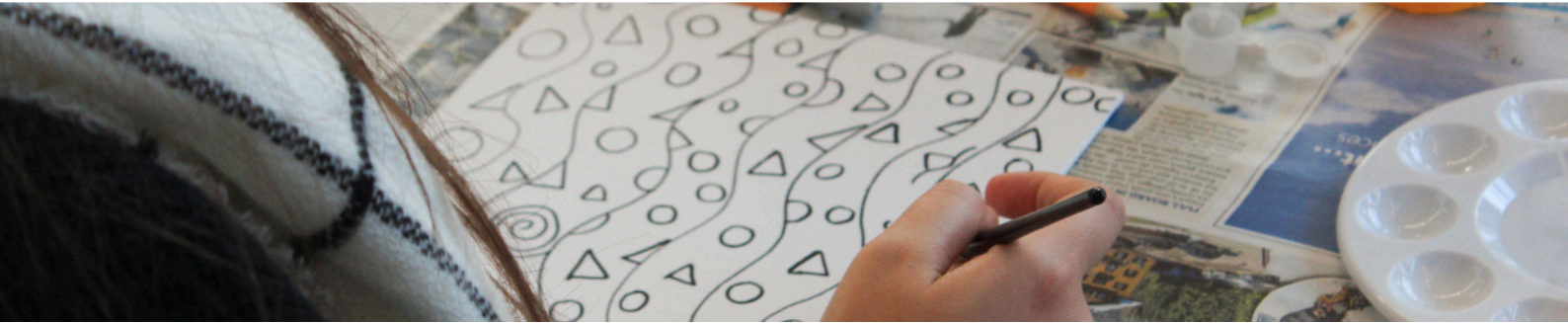
The Thriving through Culture programme aimed to:

- **raise awareness** of the impact of the arts on children and young people's mental health;
- **raise awareness** of groups providing support for children and young people;
- **understand** London's culture and mental health programmes and share these with our stakeholders (for example schools, link workers, youth services and many others);
- **create** resources to support children and young people experiencing mental ill health.





# HOW WE DELIVERED THE PROGRAMME



The work was delivered across two phases:

## Phase 1:

The co-design with young Londoners of [the Manifesto for 2.8 Million Minds](#), launched at the Houses of Parliament in May 2022 which included arts-based activities and events with young Londoners.

## Phase 2:

The second phase included delivering and embedding the actions in the 2.8 Million Minds Manifesto:

- The delivery of an arts-based mental health pilot in Tower Hamlets with 30 young Londoners, artists, and mental health specialists.
- A network to bring together partners from across the arts and culture, and health and care systems.
- The creation of resources including a school's manifesto.

## Underpinning Phase 1 and Phase 2:

- **Young Londoner Festivals:** Three festivals (2021, 2022 and 2024) coproduced by young Londoners for young Londoners. The festivals offered a platform for young Londoners through workshops, panel discussions and

creative outlets to discuss challenges and ways they can come together and create safe spaces to support their mental health and wellbeing.



# THE PROGRAMME'S CORE BELIEF SYSTEM, PRINCIPLES AND INTENTIONS

**Taking a disability justice-informed approach**

**Supporting young people's development as artists**

**Centring young people's views and ensuring these are heard at policy level**

**Facilitating cross-sector conversation and action**

**Creating safe 'brave' spaces**

**Showcasing the radical creative of bringing together art and mental health provision**

**Supporting young people to develop new skills and confidence**

**Remunerating young people for their time**



# TIMELINE

27 SEPTEMBER - 10 OCTOBER 2021 ● *Never Alone LDN*. Thrive LDN and the Mayor of London's Peer Outreach Workers hosted a series of young Londoner-led workshops and events at Rich Mix to mark World Mental Health Day 2021.

09 FEBRUARY 2022 ● Thriving Through Culture Advisory Group\*

17 MAY 2022 ● Three groups of young people launched their manifesto and action plan at the Houses of Parliament: *A Manifesto for 2.8 Million Minds*

23 JULY 2022 ● Public launch of the 2.8 Million Minds manifesto and action plan at the Liberty Festival in Lewisham.

25 JULY 2022 ● Thriving Through Culture Advisory Group\*



'Access all Areas'. Young Londoner-led festival at City Hall to mark World Mental Health Day 2022. Delivered in partnership with Living Proof, a youth consultancy, who developed a youth board to curate the festival.

10 OCTOBER 2022

Thriving Through Culture Advisory Group\* ● 14 OCTOBER 2022

Thriving Through Culture Advisory Group\* ● 08 NOVEMBER 2022

Thriving Through Culture Advisory Group\* ● 08 DECEMBER 2022

09 FEBRUARY 2023 ● Thriving Through Culture Advisory Group\*

09 FEBRUARY 2023 ● 2.8 Million Minds network meeting at the Southbank Centre.

11 MAY 2023 ● 2.8 Million Minds network meeting at the National Youth Theatre. Focus on young people's adverse experiences of mental health services, network-making and sharing interests and queries about the project.



Thriving Through Culture Advisory Group\* ● 08 JUNE 2023

12 AUGUST 2023 ● 2.8 Millions Minds: 'Should we fix something that never really worked?' A joint production between Chisenhale Gallery, the vacuum cleaner and Whitechapel Gallery. Explored ideas of rage, love and mutual care around young people's mental health through song, words, meditation, rants, films and an 8-metre doodle.

11 SEPTEMBER 2023 ● Thriving Through Culture Advisory Group\*

14 DECEMBER 2023 ● Thriving Through Culture Advisory Group\*



'REWIRE', Boundless Theatre's youth mental health summit at Stanley Arts. Created for and by young people, two days of workshops, activities, and conversations exploring how creativity and culture can be the catalyst for tackling acute youth mental health crisis in London.

24 & 26 FEBRUARY 2024

Schools Manifesto published – this report is a response to the four demands of government, health institutions, and arts organisations made in *A Manifesto for 2.8 Million Minds*.

MAY 2024



\*The Thriving through Culture Advisory Group supported the delivery of the programme by steering the work and providing constructive feedback. Membership included: Barts Health NHS Trust, Children & Young People, GLA, Mental Health the Arts, Thrive LDN, NHS England, Transformation Partners in Health and Care, Trapped in Zone One.

# SHOWCASING THRIVING THROUGH CULTURE



The unique positioning of this programme, through the GLA and Thrive LDN, has enabled us to disseminate and showcase the programme at strategic forums and events across health, culture and social care.

- The Mayor’s Cultural Leadership Board ‘deep dive’ into young Londoners and culture initiatives (chaired by Moira Sinclair).
- The World Cities Culture Forum in Helsinki.
- Events through the London Borough of Culture in Lewisham.
- The National Centre for Creative Health’s APPG Review and Creative Champions meetings.
- Transforming Partnership in Health and Care Children & Young People’s Forum
- Strategic forums across health and social care including: the NHS and GLA Children and Young People’s Strategic Forum and The Public Mental Health Forum.
- 2.8 Million Minds Presentation, Seth Pimlott, Chisenhale Gallery - Reframing Mental Health in Museums and Galleries symposium, Dulwich Picture Gallery, 27 February 2023.



# THEORY OF CHANGE

## Need

- Suicide is the main cause of death in young people under the age of 35 in the UK
- The number of under 18s referred to CAMHS has risen by 53% since 2019, escalating to over 1.2 million in 2022
- Over a quarter of a million (270,300) children and young adolescents are currently awaiting mental health support

## Short-term outcomes

- Young Londoners come together to share experiences
- Young Londoners feel supported by artists with lived experience of mental health
- Young Londoners voices are shared across the health and care system
- The health and care system develop an understanding of the benefits on arts and creativity on young Londoners mental health

## Activities

- 3x Young Londoner Festivals
- 2.8 Million Minds Studio and Committee
- 2.8 Million Minds Network
- Event at Whitechapel Gallery - "Should we fix something that never really worked"
- Thriving through Culture Advisory Group
- Arts-based engagement with young people through the delivery of the 2.8 Million Minds Manifesto
- 2.8 Million Minds Manifesto launch event at the Houses of Parliament
- Public launch at the Liberty Arts Festival (London Borough of Lewisham)
- Interviews with teachers from schools
- Interviews with children and young people taking part in Thriving through Culture

## Medium-term outcomes

- Young Londoners voices are prioritised
- Young Londoners build new skills and confidence
- The key benefits of art and creativity on young people's mental health shared with policy makers
- There's an increase in number of participants, partnerships and platforms to scale and spread messages across London communities and social networks
- Surfacing and challenging unequitable support structures in place to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing

*Line of accountability*

## Long-term outcomes

A systemic approach to embedding young-Londoner led voices into policy, action and improvements in London.

## Impact

All young Londoners will have fair and equal exposure to the social, culture, economic and physical factors which shape good health and wellbeing.

# WHAT WE ACHIEVED

Throughout the duration of the Thriving through Culture programme we engaged with more than **1,000 Londoners** made up of young people and professionals across the culture, health and care sector.



## A 2.8 Million Minds Manifesto for London

2.8 Million Minds was an action-based research process to support young people to make art and activism that changes how mental health is experienced and supported.

25 young people worked with artists [Tyreis Holder](#), [Yomi Şode](#), [Simon Tomlinson](#) and [Becky Warnock](#) to produce manifestos which were presented to the group of opinion formers, directors of arts institutions, members of parliament, funders, friends and family. Activism, graffiti, poetry and garments unfolded over the next hour reimagining how mental health can be cared for and funded. This was supported by Manifesto leads Tara Brown, Seth Pimlott, Nicola Sim and the vacuum cleaner as well as organisations Bernie Grant Arts Centre and Chisenhale Gallery.

### Engagement:

- **120+ people** contributed to the 2.8 Million Minds Manifesto, including 40+ young people from Haringey and Tower Hamlets, four artists, and partners Madlove, Chisenhale Gallery and Bernie Grant Arts Centre.
- **Over 100 people** attended the launch of the 2.8 Million Minds Manifesto at the Houses of Parliament.
- **Over 75 people** attended the public launch of the 2.8 Million Minds Manifesto at the Lewisham Borough of Culture events.



## Case Study: Seth's Top Tips from 2.8 Million Minds Manifesto

Seth Pimlott, Curator of Social Practice, Chisenhale Gallery outlines his top tips for practical reflections on how to make things happen and create a space where artists can excel. On the next page are a few extracts:

- Recruiting young people for these projects was a considerable amount of work. Making it happen relied on the goodwill and curiosity of a few mental health professionals, a robust social prescribing network in Tower Hamlets, and personal contacts. Moving forward, there may be a way of streamlining this by identifying gatekeepers within the borough and NHS Trusts, encouraging creatively minded mental health professionals to partner on such projects, and creating networks in which callouts can be widely shared.
- Fundamental to the success of these projects has been to treat young people as individuals as well as a collective. For us, this has meant one-on-one time in the sessions themselves, but also regular check-ins to work out how things are going, what works and what doesn't, and what they need to develop their own creative practice independently from the group.
- For younger children and teenagers who cannot always travel alone, arranging transport to the workshops was essential (in this case, from CAMHS Tower Hamlets and occasionally from school or home). This was budgeted for.



## Developed a 2.8 Million Minds Committee – led by Young Londoners

The 2.8 Million Minds Committee facilitated dialogue about mental health wellbeing management, taking place in a creative environment, structured around creative participation, with the objective of interrogating and informing existing systems of mental health care.

Working with Madlove Ltd, Bernie Grant Arts Centre and Chisenhale Gallery to support a diverse group of 14–25-year-olds, the Committee’s ‘social justice art school’ was presented on 12 August, part of a public exhibition at Whitechapel Gallery as the culmination event.

Culminating the second phase of 2.8 Million Minds, a joint production between Chisenhale Gallery, the vacuum cleaner and Whitechapel Gallery, young people explored ideas of rage, love and mutual care around mental health through song, words, meditation, rants, films and an 8-metre doodle.

### Engagement:

- 42 young people signed up to the 2.8 Million Minds committee, averaging 29 per meeting with a waiting list of 40+.
- 150 people attended the Whitechapel “Can we fix something that never really worked” event, with 26 young artists performing.

### Feedback from Young Londoners throughout the Thriving through Culture Programme

*“The most beautiful thing about making art is its ability to morph into whatever you want. Art is subjective, there is no right or wrong. It awakens the senses and opens up the mind to creativity and the power of our imaginations. We had the choice to not make anything if we didn’t want to, but even when we did, we had that reassurance that we were in control, and that is what made us feel safe. That is what making art can do for your mental health, and the health of others...”*

**Nemo, ‘Let’s Talk About CAMHS’, Whitechapel Gallery, August 2023.**

### “Should we fix something that never really worked?” sharing at Whitechapel Gallery 2023

*“On this project, what I have found special, is its uniqueness, the general care and openness from everyone. We have all been through a lot in our lives; we’ve all had trauma. But no comparisons are being made. No one is competing in terms of the pain they have endured. We’re all on an equal basis. We accept each other’s differences.”*



## Delivered 3x Young Londoner Festivals

Three young Londoner festivals were delivered throughout the programme: Never Alone LDN (2021), Access All Areas (2022) and Rewire (2024)

### Never Alone LDN (September / October 2021)

The Never Alone LDN festival looked at how young Londoners can come together to overcome the challenges we face, and reflecting on the experiences of young Londoners over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic. We partnered with East London's Rich Mix to host four events across three days, showcasing some of London's best young performing talent, alongside panel discussions, conversation, visual art and workshops. For World Mental Health Day on Sunday 10th October, this culminated in bringing together highlights from our two filming days at Rich Mix into a film, for broadcast at the Rich Mix cinema in East London, as well as on our website and YouTube channel.

### Access all Areas (October 2022)

The Access all Areas festival was delivered in partnership with Living Proof, a youth consultancy, who developed a youth board to curate the festival. The festival offered a platform for young Londoners to discuss challenges affecting their mental health and wellbeing in the context of access to services and information and provided a space for young people to have a dialogue with key decision makers in health and care. Members of the festival's youth board were also interviewed by BBC London on the day of the festival which featured on news bulletins both on radio and television.



#### World Mental Health Festival Youth Board Member 2021

*"I have developed confidence in myself in putting my ideas forward and also in my ability to facilitate a panel discussion - defo one for the CV! I feel like I also have developed a belief in myself in the knowledge that I have about the topic of mental health - in terms of both its history and its present state and how I can be involved in creating a change that needs to come about. This project has fuelled my passion to be involved in supporting and creating change regarding mental health even more!"*



Rae Goddard – illustrator for Rewire: Summit

## Rewire (February 2024)

Held at the end of February 2024, the Rewire Youth Summit explored the role of creativity and culture in addressing the acute mental health crisis among young people. The summit, co-created by a panel of young people, was the final initiative of the Thriving through Culture three-year programme and culminated years of work across two separate days at Boundless Theatre in partnership with Stanley Arts. The summit's first day, held on Saturday, was for young Londoners and focused on participatory experiences and workshops. Two days later, a full room of health and care leaders engaged in discussions based on insights from young people involved in the summit and wider Thriving through Culture initiatives.

### Engagement:

- There were more than 600 attendees at the young Londoner festivals.

### Rewire 2024, Chatterbox

*"I was diagnosed at 13 with a chronic mental disorder and I would tell my 10-year-old self that there's something actually metabolically going on in your brain, there's a surplus uptake of some neurotransmitters...and it means that everything matters in a way that is hard to access and it manifests in some really freaky ways but you are not in yourself.*

*"A scary thing because my normal advice for my teen self is...I would have gotten therapy sooner, but I think for my 10 year old self I would just say you are not the scary things that are happening in your head that the world can be a scary place and there are scary things taking place inside the home of your body which feels a bit like a haunted house right now but you are not the scary thing".*



## Developed a *Thriving Through Culture Network*

Through the programme, a network of young people, artists, arts organisations, health workers, youth workers and those impacted by the continued crisis in young people's mental health support were invited to share knowledge and produce art with young people impacted by mental health challenges. This was an informal and friendly event to share experiences, knowledge, needs, frustrations, resources and plans to learn collectively, support each other and build capacity.

The quarterly event was hosted by artist and mental health activist James Leadbitter, 'the vacuum cleaner'.

### Engagement:

- **More than 50 young people and professionals** were part of the Thriving through Culture Network with meetings held at Southbank Centre and the National Youth Theatre.

## Hosted a *Thriving through Culture Advisory Group*

The Thriving through Culture Advisory Group was chaired by the GLA and was made up of children and young people, arts and culture organisations and the health and care sector. The group met every two months to steer the work across the duration of the three years and provided constructive feedback.

### Engagement:

- **10 members** of the Thriving through Culture Advisory Group who supported the delivery of the programme.



## ***Produced a 2.8 Millions Minds Schools Manifesto***

In Felix Mortimer's report, he spoke to students, teachers and others in non-traditional education settings to see what works and what doesn't work. In one example, Dima, who works for Play for Progress and runs a women and musicians led programme, outlined conditions for creativity:

- Creating a space where everyone cares about you.
- Creating a space where it's ok not to know the answer, to mess up or to not speak English.
- A space where there is food and drink available.
- A space where experimentation and participation is encouraged, but not necessary.
- A space where you can work with your hands and use your whole brain on a task.

The report highlighted the overwhelming need for better mental health in schools. It is also important to acknowledge how shared experiences, creating a sense of belonging and safety and peer and teacher support the mental health of those in school. Creativity and the arts play a huge part in creating these conditions.

### **Engagement:**

- **12 teachers and 10 students** took part in developing the 2.8 Million Minds Schools Manifesto.



## **Developed a legacy for the programme**

Thrive LDN has compiled resources, including videos, evaluation reports, podcasts and guides from across the three-year programme.

These can be found on [Thrive LDN's website](#) and have been used to shape the report. This "legacy page" enables us to continue to share resources and learning from this programme after the end date.



# WHAT YOUNG LONDONERS HAD TO SAY ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES

I initially co-facilitated a 2.8 Million Minds network meeting at the National Youth Theatre in May 2023. In December 2023, I joined the Advisory Group for Rewire Summit where we worked on developing discussion sessions for the event.

I felt confident in leading a group and presenting our work. Also, in sharing my experiences in a panel discussion. I enjoyed participating in the other segments of Rewire, such as a zine-making workshop, crochet, dance movement workshop. It was an emotionally grounding day.

I am currently working with London Arts and Health and during my interview the CEO mentioned how she recognised me from my participation at Rewire & Mad Hearts (an arts and mental health festival at Queen Mary).

It was great to involve an Advisory Group over the months leading up to the event and the group was facilitated brilliantly. I would like to see such core groups/steering committees of young people continue for future events and even involving more young people.

Further exploration of the following would be good to see:

- Young people identifying as LGBTQIA+ & mental health
- Young people and local politics
- Young people and learning/mentorship opportunities in the arts



## Drashti

*Co-facilitator of 2.8 Million Minds Network 2023, Member of the Advisory Group for Rewire 2024*



# WHAT YOUNG LONDONERS HAD TO SAY ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES

I attended Boundless Theatre's youth mental health summit REWIRE, at Stanley Arts in Croydon.

We ended up having our own conversations around the discussion of creativity and mental health and came to the conclusion that using art as an outlet for your mental wellbeing is one of the best ways to process what's going on in your head.

Another interesting topic brought up was the idea of how young people tend to look elsewhere than their local area for an event or activity and how this ends up leading to a lack of community and a lack of engagement with young people. This is why an event like REWIRE is so important! Providing young people with a day full of fun activities in their local area is a great way to build a feeling of community and also for them to just meet other young people.

Something that was very well spoken of throughout the event was The Poetry Takeaway (@poetry\_takeaway) which was set up like a takeaway truck, except it was for poetry. It was so good, there was a queue! The general basis of the activity is that you would go up to the truck and talk to one of the poets, order a poem for either yourself or another person. I chose to have a poem written for another person. They would then ask you a series of questions about interests, favourite tv shows, movies, music and so on.

After ordering your poem, you've got to wait only 20 minutes before picking it up from them, which is an incredible time frame considering what they had written. My poem was amazing. You could really tell that they were truly listening to everything you were saying and taking in all the information you could give them as it was all weaved into the poem they had written. It's also an interesting concept as who would have ever thought of a poetry takeaway? Genius!

There were also other activities such as crocheting, making your own "-zine" and acting workshops too. I also made a collage with Allie's Art Club (@alliesartclub) about my "Internal Landscape".

Personally, my favourite part of the day was meeting new people and just talking to everyone. I truly felt as though I had made a lot of new friends whilst simultaneously becoming aware of all the different creative activities hanging around in different parts of London. I definitely felt uplifted and rewired!



**Mark**

*Young Londoner attending  
Rewire 2024*



# WHAT YOUNG LONDONERS HAD TO SAY ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES

“I was involved in the creation of 2.8 Million Minds Manifesto, including presenting at Parliament and Whitechapel. I was on the Advisory Committee for Rewire.

I enjoyed being able to share my voice, getting positive feedback from people other the events, for example after presenting manifesto at the Houses of Parliament, working with different young people and people from different organisations across London and the teamwork element of the programme.

I really valued linking in with people who were interesting in helping me pursue my talent and interest in poetry – based around mental health and other topics. This has been something I started whilst on the programme and has continued since. The people who ran the programme were on point. They were really fun. I felt included in every aspect of the programme which was really good.”

## Josiah

*Involved in the creation and launch of the 2.8 Million Minds Manifesto 2021, supported the “Should we fix something that never really worked” sharing at Whitechapel Gallery 2023 and member of the Rewire Advisory Group 2024*



I was part of the Advisory Group for the Rewire Summit in February 2024. As Rewire was the first official project I worked on, I thoroughly enjoyed being given a voice and the ability to do something meaningful with my passion surrounding mental health.

## Tea-Maria

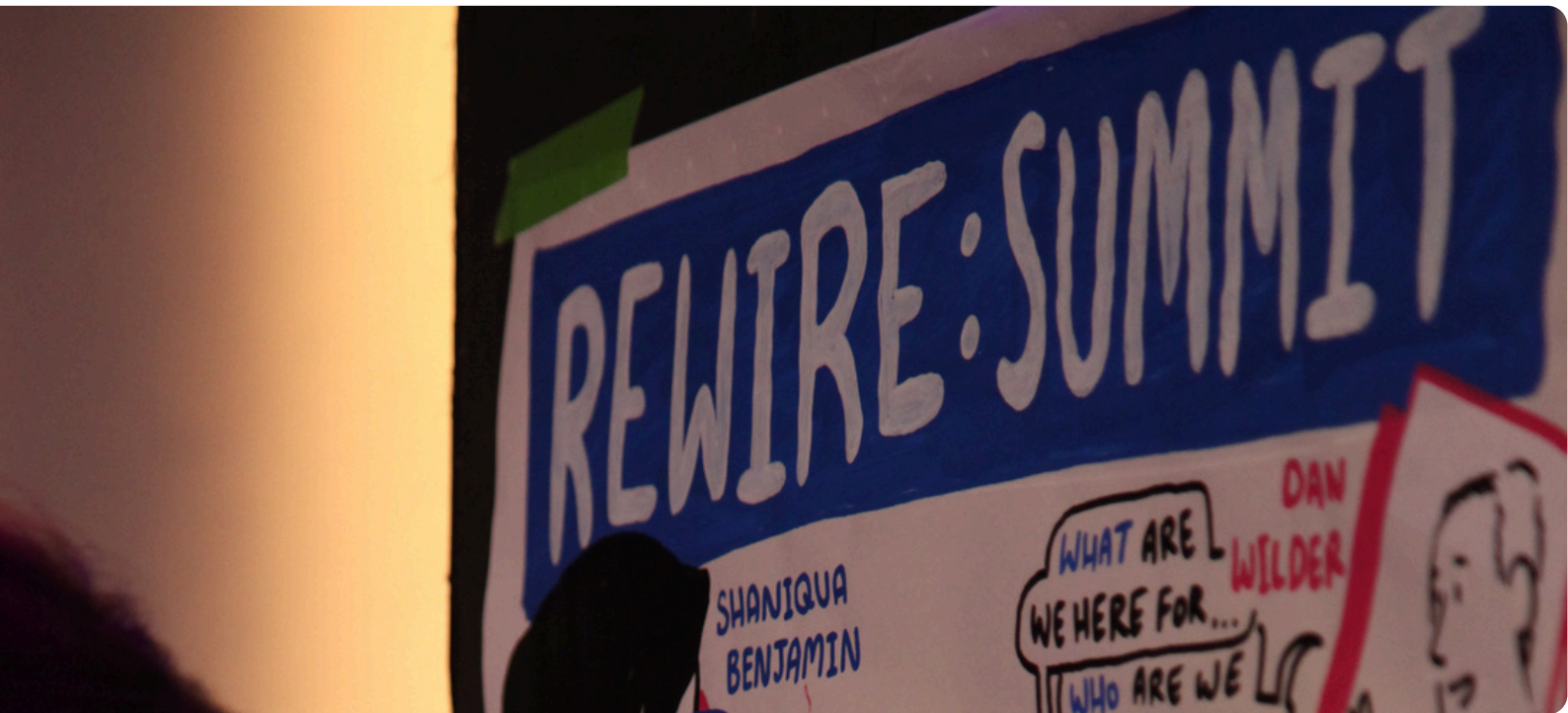
*Rewire Advisory Group 2024*

I found it really useful and important to be able to plan, edit and implement my own ideas for the event as well as the ideas of other young people. My favourite part, undoubtedly, was the second day where me and two other girls from the advisory group got to present to a hall full of people from different backgrounds on our ideas and the thoughts of other local young people that we had collected on the first day.

The experience of being in the advisory group certainly benefitted me through the exposure to effective and close teamwork. As there were not many of us in the group, it was a great environment where I really learnt how to speak and contribute my ideas to people. I felt a great improvement in my confidence and creativity through the ways in which we came up and discussed ideas through mind maps, word association and so on.

The involvement of young people at the centre of the event planning, is a very important aspect that rewire did very well. I never felt out of the loop, I always felt part of the team and respected by the members of Boundless or other participants.

# NEXT STEPS



**Rae Goddard – illustrator for Rewire: Summit**

*This programme is just the beginning.* In order to achieve our long-term goal for all young Londoners to have fair and equal exposure to the social, culture, economic and physical factors which shape good health and wellbeing is ambitious, we need everyone across culture, health and care involved.

We want to build a systemic approach to embedding young Londoner led voices into policy, action and improvements in London. We need urgent action. We need mental health to be seen as a public health

emergency, particularly for young Londoners.

We need long term funding for artists with lived experience of mental health to create safe, accessible spaces for children and young people to express themselves through art and creativity. We need programmes that support children’s mental health through arts and culture to be normalised.

Join us. Let’s create a Mentally Healthier London where creativity is celebrated and where young people’s voices are heard and prioritised.

*“We want spaces like this for young people to be second nature in our city. There may be no such thing as ‘normal’, but I believe spaces like 2.8 Million Minds need to be normalised.”*

**Young Londoner sharing at Whitechapel Gallery 2023 “Should we fix something that never really worked?”**



# APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY



- **2.8 Million Minds:** The name ‘2.8 Million Minds’ came from the number of children and young people living in London (over 2.8 million).
- **CAMHS:** Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
- **Disability Justice-Informed Approach:** A disability justice-informed approach centres the priorities and approaches of those most historically excluded groups.
- **Greater London Authority (GLA):** The GLA was established in 2000, following a London-wide referendum to approve proposals for an elected London-wide body. The Mayor of London is accountable for the strategic government of London.
- **Greater London Authority (GLA) – Culture and Creative Industries and 24 Hour London:** This team at the GLA delivers the Mayor’s vision for culture. They actively support 24-hour economy and creative industries.
- **London Borough of Culture:** Launched in 2017, the London Borough of Culture Initiative brings Londoners together and puts culture at the heart of local communities. The Rewire (2024) young Londoner festival was delivered as part of the London Borough of Culture programme in Croydon.
- **Thrive LDN:** A city-wide public mental health partnership to ensure all Londoners have an equal opportunity for good mental health and wellbeing.
- **Young Londoner:** a 14–25-year-old living or working in London.

# APPENDIX B: KEY APPROACHES TO ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THE THRIVING THROUGH CULTURE PROGRAMME

- **Having a safe, open, non-judgemental space** for young people to have deeper, meaningful conversations about their mental health and wellbeing. This also includes spaces where young people can go to simply have some *'time out'*.
- **Mixing fun and pleasure with seriousness** and striving to want something better. For example, games and open debates. No external pressure or judgement.
- **Framing lived experience of mental health challenges as a strength** in the project was “empowering” for artists, staff and young people.
  - Artists spoke voluntarily and “in multiple ways” about their own lived experiences and saw a shift in the relationship with young people as a result, including more openness to write/talk from their personal experience.
  - Meeting and making with a group of peers with shared lived experiences was powerful. Some young people found themselves talking to other people and making friends when previously they were isolated.
- Ensuring artists understand the need to **treat young people as individuals**.
- Ensuring **participants are in control of what they were/weren't sharing**. This also meant “not prioritising traumatic tellings” so participants wouldn't feel compelled to treat their vulnerabilities as currency. This was key in forming a group dynamic.
- **Clothes are signifiers** - an artist wearing a tracksuit created comfort.
- Young people liked that there were “**no rules**”, that the project felt “**open-ended**”, and there were opportunities to “**do your own thing**”. Working in this way made some participants reflect on the “tick-box”, rigid nature of their diagnostic and therapeutic experiences.
- **Welcoming young people into a new space** – e.g., be there to welcome them at the door.
- **Young people having ownership of events** through a Youth Advisory Group and taking opportunities to contribute through performances and events.

*Continued...*



- Offering opportunities for young people to tell their story and advocate for change **in a safe environment. Ensuring they are supported in whatever location they are in** – an empty shop in Lewisham shopping centre, the Houses of Parliament, Rich Mix Cinema, Whitechapel Gallery, City Hall and Stanley Arts.
- **Ensuring young people have access to services** – in 2021 our “Access All Areas” young Londoner festival included a ‘wellbeing marketplace’ with stalls from local or regional charities and organisations who support young people’s wellbeing and mental health.
- **Ensuring project timings** were suited around school, college, university schedules.
- **Finding ways to value contributions through remuneration.**

## **Managing challenges and barriers to participation:**

- **Group dynamics**, especially quieter and louder voices, was a challenge in the project. Being in groups was tough for some participants with anxiety around social spaces. It took time and support for some young people to develop a comfort level where they could express their opinions.
  - In some instances, staff had to dedicate their focus on individuals who required more **one-on-one time**.
  - Through the young Londoner festivals, there were opportunities for young people to **get involved in a number of different ways to suit their needs** – e.g., by taking part in creative art installations rather than being on a panel discussion.
- **Using a range of approaches, from workshops and panel discussions to performances and art installations**, was invaluable to minimising barriers to participation and ensuring that different needs, experiences, and perspectives were met, and embedded throughout. Having a range of different approaches and giving young people autonomy and control over how, when and what they participated was key in fostering psychological safety and trust.
- **It was important that the programme was representative of the diverse needs, values and preferences of young Londoners** including recognition that different co-production and participation approaches work for different young people.



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towards happier, healthier lives



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